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April 1, 2026

Executive Director  
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Email: [csminfo@csm.ca.gov](mailto:csminfo@csm.ca.gov)

*And Parties, Interested Parties, and Interested Persons (See Mailing List)*

**RE: Emergency Communications in Non-English Languages, 25-TC-03**  
Government Code § 7299.7; Statutes of 2023, Chapter 587 (AB 1638)  
County of Sonoma, Claimant

Dear Executive Director and Members of the Commission on State Mandates:

The County of San Joaquin (County) respectfully submits these comments in support of the above-referenced Test Claim. The County has a direct and substantial interest in AB 1638 due to its responsibilities as a provider of emergency response and public warning services, particularly in relation to compliance with Government Code § 7299.7.

San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services (OES) serves as the Alert and Warning Authority for the Operational Area, supporting eight incorporated cities, the unincorporated County, and a population exceeding 800,000 residents. The requirements imposed by AB 1638 significantly expand the scope, complexity, and immediacy of emergency communications responsibilities at the local level.

#### **A. Position of The County of San Joaquin**

- Support
- The County of San Joaquin supports AB 1638 and respectfully requests the Commission on State Mandates determine that the bill impose a reimbursable state mandate under Government Code § 7299.7. While the County supports the policy objective of equitable access to life-saving emergency information, the statutory requirements create substantial new and expanded duties that exceed existing resources and operational capacity at the local level, particularly during time-sensitive emergency incidents.
- The County further requests that the Commission authorize full reimbursement for all costs reasonably necessary to implement and sustain compliance with these requirements.

## B. Background

- AB 1638 added Government Code § 7299.7, requiring local agencies providing emergency response services to deliver emergency-related information in English and qualifying non-English languages during emergencies.
- The statute further requires that translated information be as comprehensive, actionable, and timely as English-language communications and encourages the use of culturally competent community members or native speakers where feasible

## C. New or Increased Local Agency Activities

### C.1 Language Determination

- The County of San Joaquin would utilize U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, supplemented where appropriate by locally validated datasets (e.g., school district language data or community-based organization inputs), to identify qualifying languages under Government Code § 7299.7.
- This analysis would be conducted by public information and emergency planning staff within the Office of Emergency Services in coordination with the County Public Health Services, University of the Pacific's Center for Business and Policy Research (CBPR), and San Joaquin Council of Governments. Activities include data extraction, threshold analysis, documentation of qualifying languages, and internal validation. These activities necessitate coordination across multiple departments and external partners, representing a new administrative workload.

### C.2 Emergency Communications- Operational Requirements

- AB 1638 fundamentally alters emergency communications workflows by requiring simultaneous multilingual dissemination of time-sensitive alerts, warnings, and protective action guidance.
- This would require integration of translation services (vendor-supported and/or in-house bilingual staff) into time-sensitive alerting platforms (e.g., Wireless Emergency Alerts support systems, SJReady Alerts, social media, and web updates).
- Operational steps would include drafting source messages, initiating rapid translation, conducting expedited reviews, and deploying multilingual messages across multiple channels. Additional coordination would be required between OES, Public Information Officers (PIOs), and partner agencies to ensure consistency and timeliness across all communications.

### C.3 Periodic Reassessment (Five Year Requirement)

- The County Office of Emergency Services would conduct a comprehensive reassessment of qualifying languages at least once every five years using updated ACS data or equivalent sources.
- This process would involve repeating data analysis, reviewing demographic shifts, validating findings with partner agencies, and updating internal policies, translation protocols, and vendor contracts as needed.

## Office of Emergency Services

- Administrative activities include staff time for analysis, documentation, interdepartmental coordination, and formal adoption of any revised language access requirements. This represents an ongoing administrative mandate with recurring costs.

### C.4 Parity and Quality Assurance

- Ensuring that translated information meets statutory standards of accuracy, completeness, and timeliness requires additional quality assurance measures, including:
  - Bilingual or certified linguistic review
  - Validation of technical and emergency-specific terminology
  - Potential back-translation for accuracy verification
  - Documentation for compliance and audit purposes.
- These steps add complexity and resource demands to already time-critical operations.

### C.5 Community Engagement and Culturally Competent Delivery

- To meet statutory intent, the County must engage community-based organizations, trusted messengers, and native speakers to support culturally appropriate communication.
- This may include pre-event outreach to establish communication channels, coordination during incidents to amplify messages within specific communities, and post-event feedback collection.
- These activities require sustained staff effort, partnership management, and in some cases financial support for community partners.

## D. Local Cost Impacts

### D.1 One-Time Implementation Costs

- The County anticipates significant initial costs, including:
  - Language determination and analysis: 80–120 staff hours
  - Translation contract procurement and setup: 80–120 staff hours plus vendor onboarding costs
  - Development of multilingual templates and system configuration: 100–150 staff hours
  - Training and procedural updates: 80–120 staff hours
- These efforts involve multiple classifications, including Public Information staff, Emergency Planners, IT personnel, and procurement staff.

### D.2 Ongoing Annual Costs

- Ongoing costs include, but are not limited to:
  - On-demand translation services during emergency activations
  - Continued use of contracted linguists and quality assurance reviewers
  - Community partner engagement and support
  - Maintenance of systems, contracts, and procedures.
- Given the variability of emergencies and language needs, these costs are expected to be substantial but are difficult to accurately calculate at this time.

### E. Request to the Commission

- San Joaquin County respectfully requests that the Commission on State Mandates approve the Test Claim and determine that AB 1638 (Gov. Code § 7299.7) imposes reimbursable state-mandated costs on local agencies associated with emergency communications in non-English languages.
- San Joaquin County further requests that the Commission recognize the full scope of reimbursable activities, including but not limited to language determination, real-time multilingual emergency communications, quality assurance, periodic reassessment, and community engagement efforts necessary to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.
- Additionally, San Joaquin County requests the establishment of clear Parameters and Guidelines that ensure all reasonably necessary costs, both one-time and ongoing, are eligible for reimbursement, including staffing, contracted services, technology investments, and operational modifications directly attributable to compliance.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for your attention to the significant operational and fiscal impacts AB 1638 places on local emergency response agencies.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tiffany Cacho  
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## DECLARATION OF SERVICE BY EMAIL

I, the undersigned, declare as follows:

I am a resident of the County of Sacramento and I am over the age of 18 years, and not a party to the within action. My place of employment is 980 Ninth Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, California 95814.

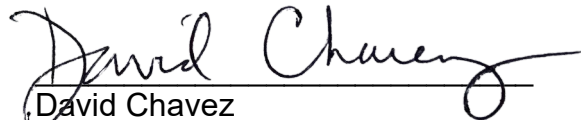
On May 7, 2026, I served the:

- **Current Mailing List dated May 7, 2026**
- **County of San Joaquin's Comments on the Test Claim filed May 7, 2026**
- **County of Santa Barbara's Written Comments in Support of Test Claim 25-TC-03 filed May 7, 2026**

*Emergency Communications in Non-English Languages, 25-TC-03*  
Government Code § 7299.7; Statutes of 2023, Chapter 587 (AB 1638); effective January 1, 2024 and operative January 1, 2025  
County of Sonoma, Claimant

by making it available on the Commission's website and providing notice of how to locate it to the email addresses provided on the attached mailing list.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct, and that this declaration was executed on May 7, 2026 at Sacramento, California.



David Chavez  
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# COMMISSION ON STATE MANDATES

## Mailing List

**Last Updated:** 5/7/26

**Claim Number:** 25-TC-03

**Matter:** Emergency Communications in Non-English Languages

**Claimant:** County of Sonoma

### TO ALL PARTIES, INTERESTED PARTIES, AND INTERESTED PERSONS:

Each commission mailing list is continuously updated as requests are received to include or remove any party or person on the mailing list. A current mailing list is provided with commission correspondence, and a copy of the current mailing list is available upon request at any time. Except as provided otherwise by commission rule, when a party or interested party files any written material with the commission concerning a claim, it shall simultaneously serve a copy of the written material on the parties and interested parties to the claim identified on the mailing list provided by the commission. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 1181.3.)

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